

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 02101 01 OF 02 120511Z

10

ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2464

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

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AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 2101

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: ELECTION DAY VOTING PROCEDURES

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH SOME CHANCES FOR FRAUD EXIST, PROCEDURES AND CHECKS ARE SUCH THAT ELECTORAL CHEATING ALTHOUGH NOT IMPOSSIBLE, WILL BE DIFFICULT. END SUMMARY.

1. A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL PRESS REPORTS HAVE GIVEN THE IMPRESSION THAT THOSE IN PORTUGAL WHO WISH TO FRAUDULENTLY ALTER THE RESULTS ON ELECTION DAY WILL HAVE AN EASY TIME OF IT. TALKS WITH MINISTER OF ADMINISTRATION MEDELO AND CDR. VASCO ALMEIDA E COSTA, AFM OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF DRAFTING MOST OF THE ELECTORAL LEGISLATION AND FOR OVERSEEING TALLYING OF RESULT, AS WELL AS

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PAGE 02 LISBON 02101 01 OF 02 120511Z

ANALYSIS OF THE VOTING DAY PROCEDURES, CONVINCE US THAT FRAUD MAY

NOT BE IMPOSSIBLE BUT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT. SPORADIC INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE ARE A MORE LIKELY DANGER.

2. VOTING DAY PROCEDURES:

(A) GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS:

6,179,626 PERSONS HAVE REGISTERED TO VOTE IN METROPOLITAN PORTUGAL. (IN ADDITION, SOME 20,000 EMIGRANTS ARE REGISTERED-- THEY WILL VOTE BY MAIL, WITH THE BALLOTS NOT COUNTED UNTIL FOUR DAYS AFTER THE POLLS CLOSE.) ON ELECTION DAY THESE REGISTERED VOTERS WILL VOTE IN THE PRECINCE WHERE THEY REGISTERED. THE 4,029 PRECINCTS HAVE BEEN SUBDIVIDED FOR ELECTORAL PURPOSES INTO SOMEWHAT LESS THAN 14,000 VOTING STATIONS IN SUCH A MANNER THAT NO STATION HAS MORE THAN 500 POTENTIAL VOTERS. THE NEWSPAPERS HAVE PRINTED INFORMATION TELLING EACH VOTER IN WHICH STATION HE SHOULD VOTE. EACH VOTING STATION HAS TWO VOTING BOOTHS AND ONE BALLOT BOX, AS WELL AS A TABLE AND CHAIRS FOR THE FIVE MEMBERS OF THE MESA--ELECTORAL BOARD--WHO WILL OVERSEE THE VOTING PROCESS ON ELECTON DAY.

(B) COMPOSITION OF THE ELECTORAL BOARDS:

THE ELECTORAL LAW LEAVES IT TO THE 12 COMPETING PARTIES TO GET TOGETHER IN EACH PRECINCT BY A CERTAIN DAY AND AMONG THEMSELVES SELECT THE FIVE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD: A PRESIDENT, HIS SUBSTITUTION, A SECRETARY, AND TWO VOGAIS (PERSONS TO CHECK OFF VOTERS NAMES). THESE BOARD MEMBERS MUST THEMSELVES BE REGISTERED TO VOTE IN THE SAME PRECINCT. FEW PARTIES WERE SUFFICIENTLY ORGANIZED TO BE ABLE TO COMPLY WITH THE LEGAL REQUIREMENT. IN MOST PRECINCTS ONLY THE PCP, THE PS, THE PPD AND THE MDP/CDE REPRESENTATIVES MET TO SELECT THE BOARD MEMBERS. ACCORDING TO CDR. ALMEIDA E COSTA, THE PPD REPS PARTICIPATED IN THE BOARD SELECTION IN ALMOST ALL PRECINCTS, AND THEREFORE WILL BE REPRESENTED ON ALMOST ALL PRECINCT BOARDS. THEIR PRESENCE WILL HELP CHECK POSSIBLE PCP OR FAR LEFT ATTEMPTS AT FRAUD. THERE MAY BE A FEW, BUT NOT MANY, BOARDS SELECTED ONLY BY THE PCP AND ITS ALLIES. IN THOSE FEW INSTANCES WHEN NO REPS FROM ANY PARTY SHOWED UP TO SELECT THE BOARD, THE LCAL MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WILL SELECT THE BOOARD FROM AMONG LOCAL RESIDENTS WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO SERVE. WE ARE TOLD THIS LOOKS LIKE IT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY IN MOST CASES.

(C) HOW TO VOTE:

THE POLLS OPEN EARLY IN THE MORNING ON APRIL 25. AT 1900 THE DOORS TO THE STATION CLOSE BUT THOSE INSIDE MAY VOTE. THE VOTER ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LISBON 02101 01 OF 02 120511Z

ARRIVAL APPROACHES THE TABLE WHERE THE BOARD SITS AND SHOWS THE PRESIDENT SUITABLE IDENTIFICATION, PREFERABLY HIS OFFICIAL ID CARD. THE TWO REGISTRARS ("VOGAIS") ON THE BOARD EACH CHECK OFF THE PERSONS NAME FROM THE IDENTICAL LISTS EACH HAS OF THOSE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE THERE. (EACH PARTY IN THE ELECTIONS MAY ALSO HAVE A REP PRESENT TO CHECK OFF VOTERS FROM THEIR OWN COPY OF THE ELECTORAL LIST.) THE PRESIDENT RETURNS THE ID CARD, CALLS OUT THE PERSONS NAME, AND HANDS HIM A BALLOT WITH THE NAMES AND SYMBOLS OF

THOSE PARTIES COMPETING IN THE ELECTIONS IN THE DISTRICT WHERE THE
PRECINCT IS LOCATED. (NOTE: THE BALLOTS CONTAIN NO NAMES OF
CANDIDATES, ONLY PARTIES.) THE VOTER THEN GOES TO ONE OF THE
TWO VOTING BOOTHS, WHERE HE PUTS A SINGLE CROSS IN THE SQUARE
NEXT TO THE PARTY OF HIS CHOICE. HE THEN DOUBLES THE BALLOT,
REDOUBLES IT, AND HANDS THE BALLOT TO THE PRESIDENT WHO PUTS IT
IMMEDIATELY INTO THE BALLOT BOX ON THE TABLE. THE VOTER THEN
LEAVES.

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PAGE 01 LISBON 02101 02 OF 02 120512Z

11

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 LISBON 2101

(D) COUNTING THE VOTE:

THE PRESIDENT COUNTS UNUSED BALLOTS, AND OBTAINS A TOTAL OF THE
NUMBER OF PERSONS WHO VOTED. THEN THE SECRETARY OPENS THE BALLOT
BOX AND DUMPS ITS CONTENTS ONTO THE TABLE. (DURING THE COUNT
EACH PRY IN THE ELECTIONS MAY HAVE A REPRESENTATIVE PRESENT.)

ANY MEMBER OF THE TABLE (OR ALL IF THEY WISH) THEN COUNT THE TOTAL BALLOTS CAST, THE TOTAL BEING CROSS-CHECKED WITH THE NUMBER WHO VOTED. THE BALLOTS ARE PLACED IN THE OFFICIAL ELECTORAL REGISTER, AND THEN ONE BY ONE THE VOTES ARE AGAIN WITHDRAWN FROM THE BOX. ONE OF THE REGISTRARS ("VOGAIS") READS EACH BALLOT AS IT IS WITHDRAWN, WHILE THE OTHER KEEPS A VISIBLE RUNNING TALLY. VOTES FOR EACH PARTY ARE KEPT IN SEPARATE PILES, AS ARE NULL OR BLANK BALLOTS. PARTY REPS MAY CHALLENGE ANY BALLOT. WHEN ALL VOTES ARE COUNTED, THE RESULTS ARE COMMUNICATED TO THE LOCAL CIVIL GOVERNOR

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PAGE 02 LISBON 02101 02 OF 02 120512Z

FOR TRANSMISSION TO THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL CENTER. THE FINAL, OFFICIAL VOTE COUNT TAKES PLACE SEVERAL DAYS LATER IN CIVIL GOVERNORS' OFFICES.

(E) POSSIBLE LEFTIST TRICKS:

CDR. ALMEIDA E COSTA SAID THAT HE KNOWS OF ONLY TWO TYPES OF TRICKS WHICH ANTI-DEMOCRATIC ELEMENTS MIGHT TRY TO PULL. ONE IS TO COUNSEL IGNORANT PERSONS TO MARK THEIR BALLOT FOR THE PARTY OF THEIR CHOICE AND THEN CROSS OUT THE PCP SYMBOL AND BOX TO INDICATE THEIR OPPOSITION TO COMMUNISM. THE RESULT WOULD BE A NULL BALLOT AND A DECREASE IN THE NON-COMMUNIST VOTE TOTALS. AS FAR AS THE ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES ARE AWARE, THIS PLOY IS NOT BEING TRIED TO ANY SIGNIFICANT DEGREE. THE COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY AND THE ELECTORAL AUTHORITIES, HOWEVER, HAVE TAKEN NO CHANCES AND ARE TELLING VOTERS THROUGH ALL MEDIA THAT TWO MARKS INVALIDATE A BALLOT. THE OTHER POSSIBILITY FOR RIGGING THE RESULTS IS FOR THE LEFT TO VOTE EARLY AND THEN CAUSE A RUCKUS TO SCARE OTHERS AWAY FROM THE POLLS. THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED FOR THIS, AND INTRODUCED AN AMENDMENT INTO THE ELECTORAL LAWS STATING THAT IN CASES WHERE THIS OCCURS AND BALLOTING IS INTERRUPTED, NO VOTES CAST ARE VALID. THE VOTE WILL BE TAKEN OVER IN THAT PRECINCT THE FOLLOWING WEEK IF THE RESULTS COULD IN ANY WAY CHANGE THE DISTRIBUTION OF DEPUTIES AMONG THE PARTIES.

3. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THAT THE AFM IS SINCERE WHEN IT STATES THAT IT WANTS THE VOTING PROCEDURES TO BE AS PERFECT AS POSSIBLE. HEAVY PENALTIES EXIST FOR ELECTORAL FRAUD, AND THE VOTING AND COUNTING PROCESSES FILLED WITH CHECKS AND BALANCES DESIGNED TO ENSURE HONESTY. THE AFM, ACCORDING TO ALMEIDA E COSTA, IS LESS WORRIED ABOUT FRAUD THAN ABOUT THE SIZE OF THE EDUCATIONAL EFFORT IT MUST MAKE TO EXPLAIN THE COMPLICATED ELECTORAL SYSTEM TO THE 70,000 MEMBERS OF THE BOARDS. FROM WHAT EMBOFFS HAVE SEEN OF THIS EFFORT, THE AFM IS DOING A GOOD JOB--DAILY TV SESSIONS EXPLAIN THE MECHANICS OF VOTING, AND FILMS WILL BE SHOWN BEGINNING APRIL 14 SHOWING PEOPLE HOW THE VOTES ARE COUNTED, ETC.

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